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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ

IRAQ

1. "The American 'dream palace'"

Columnist Jeffrey Simpson commented in the leading Globe and Mail (3/4): "...The 'dream palace' will be one in which the Americans are led by their political and military leaders through unfamiliar cultural territory, using largely inappropriate means toward long-term engagements for which Americans are not prepared, financially or psychologically. An administration with revolutionary objectives is running U.S. policy. The realists have been banished or marginalized, considered wimps too inclined to compromise. The ideologues believe they are the terrorists' nightmare, but, instead, they are the terrorists' dream, because they have overreacted. By pursuing 'regime change,' starting with a U.S. general running Iraq for two years or more, the U.S. will turn even more people against them and provide the best recruiting ground yet for militant fundamentalism. The shock sought by the Americans, therefore, will more likely be to themselves. Unless, of course, the U.S. does an Afghanistan, and turns Iraq, once conquered, from last year's headlines to today's back pages. In which case, Iraq, an artificial country, will fall apart in chaos."

2. "The real reasons for deposing Saddam"

Columnist Paul Stanway wrote in the conservative tabloid Edmonton Sun (3/1): "...Promoting democracy in the Middle East. In a nutshell, that's what the conflict with Iraq is all about. Yes, it's an argument over weapons of mass destruction and the crumbling authority of the United Nations, but in the long run it is, as Bush so eloquently explained, about promoting the spread of democratic values to create a more stable and peaceful world. One in which despots like Saddam Hussein are not able to seize the wealth of a nation and use it to fund aggressive wars against their neighbours - which in his case have already taken the lives of over a million people."

3. "War of ideas"

Under the sub-heading, "U.S. values of liberty, democracy and free institutions could work with Islam," the right-of-center Calgary Herald (3/1) commented: "...Those who saw in the rubble the just, if regrettable, fruits of U.S. foreign policy, required Americans to don sackcloth and ashes to atone for the poverty and hopelessness in the tyrannies of the Middle East. They prescribed understanding, conciliation, repentance and ultimately, appeasement. Retaliation, they supposed, would harden attitudes and further compound those ineffable root causes. Such thinking was patently absurd. Certainly, poverty can be the petri-dish of resentment, but it was not the poor who attacked America. It was the sons of the affluent. And the more one understands what inspired al-Qaeda and its Taliban hosts, the less one is inclined to conciliate: How does one placate somebody who wants nothing of you but your life?... The U.S. failure to depose Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War was taken in the Arab world as weakness, not restraint. Now, Saddam's continued survival, the symbolism of an Arab dictator defying the Great Satan, sustains the terrorist hope of ultimate victory. Saddam with nuclear weapons would much encourage it. The reverse is also true: His removal will cause alarm and despondency among the militants. Saddam, therefore, must go."

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